

Mark Masselli: This is Conversations on Healthcare. I am Mark Masselli.

Margaret Flinter: I am Margaret Flinter.

Mark Masselli: Margaret, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and from the White House to the Sports Arena people are very engaged in supporting friends and family who are facing this serious health problem. Now, let's spend a few moments talking about such problems and how people might help their friends understand this issue.

Margaret Flinter: Well, you know one thing we can say is that this is a health problem that has garnered national attention and strategies to ensure that people have access to the kind of early screening and detection that we believe can save lives and we have somewhat of a lesson for us in all of our conversations on health reform I think certainly the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program makes mammograms and office visits for screening for breast cancer available to women at no charge who are of low income and uninsured. And this is one of those few programs that also doesn't restrict based on people's immigration status. So I think that's been a real positive around bringing a very necessary service to women.

Mark Masselli: That's a very good point and screening really remains a very powerful tool. Study after study has shown that regular mammograms can help lower the number of deaths for breast cancer for many women. And last year we had extensive conversations with people about the preventative taskforce recommendations, questioning the benefits of mammogram screening for women under-50 and a lot of people opining on who should get screened and exactly when.

Margaret Flinter: That's right. And in addition to the focus on screening, I think two most powerful areas of interest are prevention of breast cancer and treatment. Certainly on the prevention side, there is a lot of activity going on trying to understand what really causes that we know that genetic conditions are a piece of this but certainly there is a lot of interest in whether there are environmental causes as well. And then on the treatment end, again looking back at genetics and the particular types of tumors how do we target the right treatment to the right woman that's most minimally evasive and the most effective and I think that's all very important research that's going on.

Mark Masselli: It is. Margaret, today we have a very dynamic guest Mayor Joseph Curtatone from Somerville, Massachusetts. He spoke at our Weitzman Symposium last June about "Shape Up Somerville" an innovative community based program and let's transform the Town of Somerville into healthy place to live. Mayor Curtatone is a critical thinker on the issues of policy and practice and

his work at “Shape Up Somerville” is one that I think the country is following and we are happy that he can join us today.

Margaret Flinter: I am looking forward to talking to him again. And no matter what the story, you can hear all of our shows on our website www.chcradio.com. Subscribe to iTunes to get our show regularly downloaded or if you would like to hang on to our every word and read a transcript of one of our shows, come visit us at www.chcradio.com. And think about becoming a fan of Conversations on Healthcare on Facebook and also follow us on Twitter.

Mark Masselli: And as always, if you have feedback, email us at www.chcradio.com. We would love to hear from you. Before we speak with Mayor Curtatone, let's check in with our producer Loren Bonner with Headline News.

Loren Bonner: I am Loren Bonner with this week's Headline News. The administration wants to make sure that the youngest and most vulnerable Americans are not being denied health coverage based on preexisting conditions. In a letter to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, Department of Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius outlined a range of steps that can be taken to help preserve coverage options for children regardless of their health status. Insurance plans in several states have stopped writing new-child-only policies because the healthcare reform law prohibits them from discriminating against sick children. Insurers have had to come up with ways to prevent families from only buying insurance for their children when they become sick. HHS has been working with states to encourage them to come up with their own solutions, such as requiring that insurers sell child-only policies if they want to sell family coverage, establishing open enrollment periods that treat healthy and sick kids identically, allowing families to buy and to medicate our cheap coverage even if they don't qualify and ensuring that states high risk pulls off for a full range of pediatric benefits. A federal Judge in Florida has ruled that a legal challenge to the new healthcare law by officials from 20 states can move forward. Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum who is joined in the effort to repeal the healthcare law says all states have to do to spoil the new law is to get just one part of it thrown out by the courts.

Bill McCollum: If any one portion of this law is declared unconstitutional like the individual mandate required to buy own insurance without them paying a penalty if that's declared unconstitutional the whole law goes down.

Loren Bonner: The full hearing is scheduled for December 16th, meanwhile the Virginia lawsuit will be ruled on by the year's end over the same issue, the constitutionality of the healthcare reform law, and whether the federal government has the power to impose the insurance requirement. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that Hispanics can expect to live longer than whites by more than two years and blacks by more than seven years.

The CDC report is a first of its kind to calculate Hispanic life expectancy in the United States. A leading theory is that Hispanics who manage to immigrate to the US are among the healthiest from their countries. The report is a strongest evidence of what some experts call the Hispanic paradox. Longevity for a population with a large share of poor under educated members that are normally linked with the life shortening health problems. The news coincides with more positive findings for Hispanics, the Association of American Medical Colleges reports that more minority students are entering US Medical Schools and the increase is most pronounced amongst Hispanics. The groups all first-year enrollment jumped to 1539 in 2010, 9% points above 2009 levels.

Margaret Flinter: This week on Conversations we are learning about an innovative community based intervention that's now serving as a national model to fight childhood obesity. "Shape Up Somerville" originally began as a research study at Tufts University for overweight first through third graders in the Somerville Massachusetts Public School System. Seven years later the program has engaged and transformed the health of the entire Somerville community. Somerville is a compact city right outside of Boston with lots of public transportation and commercial squares. Transforming the roadways was relatively easy. Since 2004 over a 1000 crosswalks have been stripped, more bike lanes added and more walk able and safer routes to schools have been carved out. The city has also rebuilt and added parks, but it didn't stop there. All sectors of the community were encouraged to step up. "Shape Up Somerville" went on to introduce healthy eating and collaboration with the introduction of more physical activity. The program worked with the Somerville School food service department to enhance the quality and quantity of healthy foods for students. Schools now purchase locally grown produce for their school lunches. The town has two community gardens in a farmers market it even launched two community supported agriculture sites where residents can purchase shares of near by farmers crops. Changes have also been made in restaurants to offer things like smaller portions and more visible nutrition labeling. As the country becomes involved with efforts to fight childhood obesity through First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Campaign, Somerville Massachusetts is becoming the national example for all communities to introduce healthy living. Let's turn now to our interview with Mayor Joseph Curtatone who can tell us more.

Mark Masselli: This is conversations on healthcare today we are speaking with Somerville Massachusetts Mayor Joseph Curtatone. The leadership behind "Shape Up Somerville" a campaign to fight childhood obesity on all fronts, welcome Mayor Curtatone. You know over the past 7 years the town of Somerville Massachusetts has worked to transform itself into the urban ideal of a healthy place to live and raise children. When the project began 46% of your elementary school kids were overweight and that inspired you to launch a series of initiatives. Can you tell us about those initiatives and what have been the tangible results of your efforts today?

Mayor Joseph Curtatone: First of all thanks for having me in your show and more importantly thanks for you know having this conversation it's important that we elevate the social consciousness of this entire country. Because it's not about losing weight this is what how we live. We saw by taking a community based environmental approach. Change in the environment which affects how we decide, again how we play, how we eat. School children gained one less pound and some on the community. Now that plays out over time that has positive consequences but what we took out of this and what we extrapolate is how we can adopt citywide policies, initiatives to incentivize how you act you know to help you make decisions to eat smart and play hard and live well. And it's been a great success we have seen more kids we are from studies you know more people active in recreational activities. We gain positive results in terms of people access some good and wholesome food opportunities that we are creating across the city. We just see a city more active, more healthy and obviously in terms of reversing the trends of childhood obesity that is the greatest challenge to health across this country.

Margaret Flinter: Mayor, the First Lady Michelle Obama has specifically promoted "Shape Up Somerville" as a model in her national Let's Move Campaign which we all know about how and is aimed to ending childhood obesity with the new generation. And in her campaign she always says it's going to take all of us to make it happen. Now you know as mayor that that usually means building community, collaborators in your support can sometimes come from unexpected places and your oppositions can sometimes come from unexpected places. If you can tell us who have your partners been in this project and how did you get people on board who might not have been likely supporters at the get go.

Mayor Joseph Curtatone: I think you bring up a critical point. It is a challenge to take on and reverse the trend of childhood obesity and what I mean by that no one elected official government leader, no one change in any health regulation of policy is going to fix this. This is not a technical problem we can just change a lot and someone make a proclamation and it's going to change itself. We are talking about social change. Now we have seen this as a nation as we are taking on tobacco, anti-tobacco campaign, anti-smoking campaign. And it's going to take us all, it's going to take the community and every community across this country, every institution and organization process country to raise their social consciousness to change the way we live, how we eat, how we play. And I would say, we have had no challenges and because we understood and took this on as an adaptive challenge. Sometimes when you see and communities do this for the right reasons where they just come out right away and _____ 11:52 or pass this regulation or some other regulation, and they are right that's a good policy decisions, you might get resistance because you haven't given a work that a community will do. What we did in Somerville was one I think we ignited and energize people's values as this is still a value based challenge you know and everybody wants the community that is healthy place to live, to work, to raise

your family to send your kids to those schools and so everybody can align with that. And if you can see how their individual goals and their task you know what's on the businessman, I mean I am part of a social service agency, I am just apparent how those align with their value. They are willing to take on this challenge and we are able to step back and give them the work and the community really just took this on. It has been the community and either community based approach and that's the only way it can work and it's the only way it can sustain.

Mark Masselli: Mayor you are a great turner of phrases and I really like the one that you have used the healthy choice must be the easy choice, you have applied this to everything from school lunch choices to recreational options that promote physical activity or what are some of the public policy initiatives you have championed that you think can be replicated by other communities who might look to Somerville for best practices that are looking to make healthy choices that the easy choice.

Mayor Joseph Curtatone: Every decision we make is guided by the tentative shape of Somerville and why is that the case because if you look at Somerville's history like many communities especially need Urban Call over the last half century since mid century, you have seen the consequential connectivity of policy failure, how field policies around land use planning, how we design and place our open and recreation spaces, transportation planning, food policy, and those all collide, those all collide over time and they affect us socially and on our health and childhood obesity is a consequence of those field policies. So what we recognize is we have to change the environment and we have taken that approach to really guide us on how we plan our open spaces. We have a very dynamic aggressive open space initiative to build new parks. We will build parks in a certain way that are very dynamic, that are very inclusive of people. We have used in our transportation planning to construct and design more traffic mitigation measures, more pedestrian and bicycle enhancement measures. Now we have changed our food policy. We have expanded and evaluated the type of recreation program that you mentioned. We have tried to develop a host and many other opportunities of people to get organic eat smart and play hard and live well. And again at the end of the day this is important because this is where ideology can collide. We are not telling you what to do. We are not going to tell you, you are going to die or how to eat how to live, however, it is not the government's responsibilities. It is our responsibility as elected officials as governments to set the stage, set the table and with good policy and good decision making that allows you the opportunity to make good choices that allows the healthy choice to be that easy choice.

Margaret Flinter: Well Mayor, you are really describing leadership at the local level in all of the work that you are doing and certainly one issue that faces all of our political leaders and communities is the resources that have dried up over recent years, right and having adequate resources to make this transformation of

communities into healthy ones. So in this time of physical challenge and I know it seems like municipalities were always in a physically challenged time. Where does the funding for initiatives come from and we would be particularly interested in your thoughts on the Healthcare Reform Bill, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act which created that large public health in prevention fund. Do you see this is really providing the kind of support and the systems to cities to make these transformations?

Mayor Joseph Curtatone: I think it's definitely going to help however the one thing I would stress and I had that's a good question because I speak around the country and I have spoken to leaders around the world about this issue but in this country especially you know a local mayor or a city manager or a town administrator or selectmen a counsel woman would say you know how do we do it, you know I don't have the capacity. We don't have the finances, my job is to get this budget in order the budget the bottom line get my bond rating up and I don't know anybody moves to a city because the budget is balanced and the bond rating is up. I mean we don't let the finance people run our city however we have to guide ourselves a good sound fiscal policy. But I will say that Somerville is not a rich community. We spend least per capita out of any community and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with a population of 50,000 people or more. We tried to do that smartly but we also try to leverage our partnerships. We have partnerships with academia. We have partnerships with our local hospitals at Cambridge help lines. We have partnerships in the business community because we have aligned all our values and we have challenged people to take on this work. And there are plenty of opportunities to access self-running two grants, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for the CDC. I know the First Lady will be coming out and the president will be coming out with initiatives to help communities with tools for different grants and funding to plan and assess how they can enact good policy changes and good planning to tackle the issue of childhood obesity in their communities. But a lot of these things don't cost money or it's just really how we reallocate some of the funds we are using. Developing good language policy doesn't cost any money. It's just setting your priorities. Good food policies in our schools you know instead of opening just packaged food you know cooking the food onsite and having good and wholesome food opportunities really not a big money investment by the **tidy** municipality. It's reallocating funds and might be a little bit more but the quality is going to be better. So a lot of times it's really, most times I would submit it's not a big monetary investment upfront it's setting the stage with good policy, good decision making, great planning, leveraging your partnerships with the business community, with academia, with the non profit agencies and with that partnership you can leverage a lot of funding.

Mark Masselli: This is Conversations on Healthcare. Today we are speaking with Somerville Massachusetts's Mayor Joseph Curtatone the leadership behind "Shape Up Somerville". Mayor, I love your holistic approach. You have been talking a little bit about transportation and noting that Somerville doubled the

number of bicycle lanes on its road and about the response of the citizens to this, is it true that you built it and they will come, they increase the number of people who are out there biking all of the time and also talk to us a little bit about those in the community who might be economically challenged and have you done any variations on the theme to make sure that it reaches everyone in the community your new initiative.

Mayor Joe Curtatone: Two good questions, I feel they will definitely come. I am amazed when we put on just bike lanes who comes out and ride their bikes and we are seeing more and more people riding. Yesterday we just did a bike rally across the city, we got on our bike midday and rode across as to celebrate 10 new miles of bike lanes. And again in our community is only 4.1 square miles and we put up 10 more miles of bike lanes, and it's been fantastic and some of our, we have done a lot of new road work in the city and some of the bike lanes are on the bumpiest roads and still people are out there. They embrace it just like we have built a new park people love it because they want, people want those opportunities to go and be active, and live healthy lifestyles. And the other good question you had is how do you reach out or engage those more economic disadvantage and that's important because the most susceptible, population greatest at risk are the racial and ethnic minorities. In Somerville we speak 52 languages from countries around the world. And we see the challenge on this issue on a couple of fronts, one we have positive results when we kicked off "Shape Up Somerville" because as we trained and had programs for teachers and students we were very sensitive to the different language and diversity issues in the city. We sent out communications in several different languages, we talked to those parents as we trained on cooking skills, we were sensitive to cultural needs. But also the challenge comes in our school transient population. Sometimes children come in mid-year, don't stay the whole time, they pop in, they pop out, and you want to have sort of that sustained engagement. And so our focus as we have used data to guide us along the way is you will see the next generation of Shape Up really focusing on more ethnic and racial minority communities in the city.

Margaret Flinter: And Mayor one area where municipalities can make a difference in healthcare and in healthcare cost is with their own employees. Have you instituted any wellness or health promotion policies for your own Somerville City employees that you think are particularly effective and any outcome data on these initiatives to show?

Mayor Joe Curtatone: We have done a host of things with our employees from having Fitness Buddy program parting out with someone having Mayor's Fitness Challenge. We have done health fairs. We also provide different mechanisms with some of our employees. We might reimburse you for your gym or yoga or health club membership. We have done many of different things to educate them and invest in their wellness. And we are going to ramp that up even more, especially upfront, and we have a healthier workforce, it's going to be more

productive workforce, and financially upfront is going to save us money in the long run. We know that very well because our healthcare cost went up 90% in this fiscal year and in the last ten years our healthcare costs have tripled from \$12 million a year to almost \$40 million a year. And that's unsustainable so in addition to all the healthcare reform that's going on we need to continue invest in our human resources and their health.

Mark Masseli: Mayor when you look around that country in the world what do you see in terms of innovations and who gets you excited and who should our listeners at Conversations be keeping an eye on?

Mayor Joe Curtatone: We are starting to have more and more hearing from colleagues around the world as well one conversation we had initially few years ago was with the Country of Singapore. We advised them a daily lunch of their version of Shape Up as well. This weekend we are having a final Summer Street Activity. One of the things we did in summer was like, with our limited open space, limited space and only 5% of our land area is open of recreational spaces how do we recapture our streets for more activity? So with Summer Street Program that was really focused at what they are doing in Colombia and what we will be doing is closing down our 3rd Street which we started this summer which is about one of the longest streets and say about a mile long and there we do nothing but recreational activity, community engagement and good healthy food options for people to enjoy sort of this roving Urban Park Program across the city. And those are the examples we have got from around the world. And again as you see people's social consciousness raised on this issue, I think you are going to see this issue play out in all parts of the world.

Margaret Flinter: Great and today we have been speaking with Somerville, Massachusetts Mayor Joseph Curtatone, the leadership behind Shape Up Somerville, a campaign to fight childhood obesity and Mayor if I can paraphrase you or quote you a campaign to get people to work hard, play hard and live well. Mayor, thank you so much for joining us today.

Mayor Joe Curtatone: Alright eat smart, play hard, live well, thank you.

Mark Masseli: Each week Conversations highlights a bright idea about how to make wellness a part of our community in everyday lives.

Margaret Flinter: This week's bright idea focuses on an innovative program from Somerville, Massachusetts. Hallmark Health Match.doc service helps connect young patients with primary care providers. The first session took place in a Somerville restaurant last week. Modeled on popular Speed Dating Program Match.doc brings together groups of young patients and providers preparing them for short informal conversations in which patients voice their needs and physicians explain how they can help. During the session last week five physicians and a nurse practitioner sat at tables in the back of the restaurant.

Patients received sheets with each provider's picture, credentials and special medical interest along with suggestive questions and a space for taking notes. During the short meeting patients asked the providers about their hour of services, referrals, and insurance coverage while also discussing their family and professional lives. Both the patients and the providers seem to welcome the opportunity to have a real conversation with each other. And many left the session having found a successful match. Hallmark Health aims to mark at Match.doc towards young people in their 20s and 30s who are the least likely to have found a primary care provider yet most likely to be affected down the road by growing shortage of primary care providers. The Association of American Medical Colleges predicts that within ten years the US will suffer from a shortage of 90,000 physicians alone, making it difficult for young people to find a family physician whom they know and trust. And going without primary care can have serious consequences for patients in any age group. For example, not receiving regular health screenings can mean missing the early warning signs of conditions like diabetes or elevated cholesterol. The supporting healthcare is not only risky but it can lead to more medical expenses for a patient and for the society. But with Match.doc's help, young patients in the Boston area have the opportunity to sidestep some of these medical and financial problems and find a provider who is right for them. Now that's a bright idea.

Margaret Flinter: This is Conversations on healthcare. I am Margaret Flinter.

Mark Messalli: I am Mark Messalli, peace and health.

Conversations on Healthcare, broadcast from the campus of Wesleyan University at WESU, streaming live at Wesufm.org and brought to you by the Community Health Center.